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THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

Written statement*/ submitted by the Transnational Radical Party,
a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[11 January 2001]

*/ This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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1. The right to development belongs fundamentally to peoples. It originates in their paramount right to self-determination. Articles 1 and 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights emphasize that it is "by virtue of" the right to self-determination that peoples enjoy the right to "freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development" and to "freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources." Accordingly, Article 1(2) of the General Assembly's 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development establishes that development "implies the full realization of the right of peoples to self-determination." Self-determination means, at a minimum, that peoples must enjoy the right to participate in the design and implementation of a genuine sustainable development policy. Any state "development" policy the proceeds without participation by the peoples it affects—without, that is, respect for their right to self-determination—is not development; it is colonial exploitation.

2. As early as 1969, Article 2 of General Assembly Resolution 2542 (XXIV) made clear that the right to development requires the "immediate and final elimination of all form of . . . [the] exploitation of peoples." Indeed, the colonization and exploitation of a people renders their pursuit of a genuine sustainable development policy impossible. It also violates the full range of human rights that can only be guaranteed if a government respects its peoples' right to self-determination.

3. For these reasons, we wish to call the Commission's attention to the ongoing exploitation of the land and resources of the peoples of Tibet and East Turkestan (Xinjiang) by China. (By Tibet, we refer to the historical Tibet, including the "Tibet Autonomous Region," as well as substantial regions of the Chinese provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan, which traditionally formed part of the eastern Tibetan provinces of Amdo and Kham). China repeatedly proclaims that it considers the right to development paramount. In its most recent White Paper, "50 Years of Progress in China's Human Rights" (Feb. 17, 2000): "[T]he Chinese government has always put the people's rights to subsistence and development first." It is therefore not only tragic, but also self-defeating, that China has pursued a consistent policy of exploiting Tibet and East Turkestan's resources, with neither the participation nor the consent of the Tibetans and Uighur peoples.

4. In Tibet, for example, "development" proceeds according to policies formulated by Beijing without any meaningful participation by Tibetans. Moreover, the projects that China pursues in Tibet do not benefit the Tibetan people. Virtually all of the natural resources and material wealth extracted from Tibet is channeled back to China, where it is used primarily to enrich the its eastern regions. Even the benefits of those development projects that could benefit Tibetans accrue instead almost exclusively to the millions of Chinese who have been encouraged by China's population transfer policies to resettle in Tibet. Chinese businessmen, investors and government officials enjoy most of the wealth derived from the exploitation of Tibet's resources. In 1997, for example, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) noted that "[p]rofitable returns to the state are generated by

high profit levels of monopoly state enterprises reliant on *Tibetan* raw materials as their primary inputs, obtained at prices below market rates . . . . Transfer pricing is a systematic feature of the extraction of Tibet's resources for Chinese use."

5. In June 1999, President Jiang Zemin proclaimed the so-called "Western Development" campaign. In theory, this refers to a systematic policy of developing "western China" by improving its economic infrastructure and providing more funds for education, the environment, and the development of technology. In practice, it represents an escalation of a long-standing Chinese policy of extracting the wealth of natural resources that exist in Tibet and East Turkestan for the benefit of the Chinese people. It is no accident, for instance, that China refers to Tibet as *Xizang*, which means "Western Treasure House." Beijing's central planners view Tibet as a wealth of resources to be extracted for China's benefit. This conduct is inconsistent with the Tibetan people's right to participate in formulating a sustainable and environmentally-sound development policy that will begin to alleviate the devastating poverty in Tibet.

6. Current development policies in Tibet and East Turkestan are conceived and implemented without any meaningful participation by the Tibetan and Uighur peoples. According to the Tibet Information Network (TIN), "the policies being implemented, imposed from the top down and failing to address key local needs, may be extremely detrimental to people living in the western regions." These polices are also pursued without regard for their impact on the lives of Tibetans and Uighurs. For example, a Uighur scholar told TIN that, to open a railway link between Urumqi (East Turkestan's capital) and Kashgar, the government demolished Uighur shops and houses in its path, depriving many Uighurs of their homes and livelihoods: "The Uighur people, who are already facing increasing pressure to survive due to the numbers of Chinese migrants arriving in the region, are simply unable to compete and to participate in the development of their own economy."

7. Officially, the rationale for the Western Development campaign is to alleviate the disproportionate level of poverty in "western China." TIN's research indicates that: "[I]n 1998, the per capita income of coastal [eastern] farmers was 3600 yuan, nearly three times that of farmers in the west." But the evidence suggests that poor farmers and nomads, who make up 80 percent of the west's population, will gain little from the new large-scale development and mineral exploitation projects. Rather, the principal beneficiaries will be the urban Chinese migrants and settlers, whose businesses and employment opportunities will flourish as a result of the priorities set by the central government in Beijing.

8. For example, of the ten large-scale "Western Development" projects that China has launched for the year 2000, not one is located in the "Tibet Autonomous Region," where many of the poorest Tibetans live. Instead, Beijing has determined they should be constructed in the wealthier western regions with better infrastructure. These regions are

primarily dominated by Chinese settlers, not Tibetans. Similarly, China has declared an intent to build roads, railroad lines, and airports in the west. According to TIN, however, their purpose is to facilitate the extraction of raw materials and goods *out of* Tibet and to the eastern regions of China that already enjoy a far better infrastructure and economy. In 1995, China explained the theory behind this apparent injustice in "The Progress of Human Rights in China": "While some areas and some people become rich first, they are encouraged to help poor areas and people get rich." This "trickle down" theory has yet to bring any appreciable benefits to the poorest residents in China, who continue to be the peoples of Tibet, East Turkestan, and other peoples in "western China."

9. A tremendous proportion of China's energy resources, including oil, gas, and hydropower, are located in East Turkestan and the Tibetan province of Amdo (Qinghai). Yet TIN reports that "[e]nergy resources, including hydropower and gas, are being exploited primarily for use in eastern China, rather than to assist industrialisation in the west." For example, the Chinese government has initiated the construction of a gas transmission pipeline from East Turkestan's Tarim oil field to Shanghai, and "the pipeline is designed to provide comparatively clean fuel to the east, rather than using the gas to power industrial development in Xinjiang itself." Not only do Tibetans and Uighurs enjoy none of the benefits derived from the exploitation of their land's energy resources, evidence also indicates that these projects are pursued in an environmentally destructive manner, polluting the forests and natural water sources of Tibet and East Turkestan. Like the now-defunct World Bank resettlement project that China had planned last year for Amdo, current energy projects are developed without any consultation with Tibetans or Uighurs—the peoples most affected by them—and without any assessment of their potentially drastic environmental impact.

10. An analogous example of this kind of exploitation is the current plan to construct an oil pipeline between Chad and Cameroon. The World Bank, which has approved $193 million in loans to assist Chad, Cameroon and a consortium of oil companies develop the oil reserves, believes this project will help alleviate the poverty of Chad's seven million people. The Bank estimates that the pipeline will generate $2 billion in revenues for Chad in the next 25 years. But here again, (i) the oil pipeline's ostensible beneficiaries, Chad's people, have not been consulted; (ii) Chad's government, which will collect and control the use of the oil revenues, has an atrocious human rights record; and (iii) the pipeline traverses key water systems, key river systems in Chad and Cameroon, and the potential for leakage is quite serious. Like China's energy projects in Tibet and East Turkestan, the pipeline is being imposed upon Chad's people from above, without their consultation or approval.

11. China claims to prioritize economic rights for all of its people. It continues, however, to focus the vast majority of its investment on the industrialized areas of eastern China and wealthier urban regions of the west—all at the expense of the poorest citizens in China: the rural and nomadic inhabitants of Tibet and East Turkestan. According to the

ICJ, per capita spending on healthcare, education, and subsistence is lower in the "Tibet Autonomous Region" than anywhere else in China. (It is difficult to ascertain the respective figures for the Tibetan provinces of Amdo and Kham because the Chinese government has broken up and renamed these provinces to facilitate their governance by Beijing.) This means that Tibetans have neither the economic resources nor the education to compete for the new jobs and positions that "Western Development" policies in their lands do create. Similarly, a Uighur and former resident of Urumqi explained: "To get a good job, you have to speak, read and write Chinese fluently. You can do all of your education in Uighur, but . . . then you wont' be able to get a good job. . . . All the big companies are Chinese." The current development policy not only fails to benefit Tibetans and Uighurs, it perpetuates the very inequities it is ostensibly designed to remedy.

12. The motive behind "Western Development," as Chinese economist Hu Angang candidly acknowledged, is to preserve the Communist Party's political control in "western China": "The worst case scenario – that we're trying to avoid – is China fragmenting like Yugoslavia. Already, regional [economic] disparity is equal to – or worse than – what we saw in Yugoslavia before it split." A Uighur researcher likewise affirmed that, while the "authorities in China say that it is vital to bring in skilled and entrepreneurial workers from China to develop the economy and implement Western Development," in fact, it is encouraging the "mass settlement of Chinese in the region [East Turkestan]" to help "ensure 'stability.'" The central government's "development" policies, in other words, are intended first and foremost as tools of political control to ensure "stability" in Tibet and East Turkestan—not to bring what is desperately needed by Tibetans, Uighurs, and other poor inhabitants in the West: better healthcare, education, and employment.

13. The right to development consists in a "rights based approach based on [local] empowerment and participation in the decision-making and execution." E/CN.4/2000/WG.18/CRP.1, para. 64. China's exploitation of Tibet and East Turkestan's natural and mineral resources, which proceeds without these peoples' participation and which does not benefit them, is completely inconsistent with respect for the human right to development. Only when Tibetans and Uighurs enjoy genuine self-determination, which includes the right to freely determine the disposition of their natural and mineral resources within a framework of environmental conservation and international cooperation, can they truly enjoy the right to development. We therefore urge the Commission to adopt a resolution calling on the Chinese government to protect the human rights of the Tibetan and Uighur peoples, including their rights to self-determination and development.